A GUIDELINE FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF BADAKHSHAN

BY

A.H. AMIRI

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Introduction

Badakhshan, one of the poorest provinces of the country, is located in the extreme north-eastern part of Afghanistan and covers a total of 7,403 square kms of land. It is bordered with Tajekistan in the north-east, Kunar, Laghman, and Kapisa in the south, Takhar in the west and China and Pakistan in the south-east. Based on 1984 population census, Badakhshan's population was estimated at 549,077 people of whom 281,692 males and 267,385 females. A total of 11,118 people live in cities which merely counts for 2% of the total population. Badakhshan's population has been badly affected during the war. For instance, as reported by UNIDATA, 9 percent of the total population of Kouran-o-monjan and 7.9 percent of the people in Buharak district were killed during the war. According to a scurvy made by UNIDATA, the incidence of disability could be the highest in Darwaz district. More than 6.7 percent of the total population of the province became disabled during the war period. Also the percentage of orphans and widows of Badakhshan may be the highest in the country.

More than 90 percent of its population are engaged in agriculture and animal growing. Many people work on others' land on crop-sharing basis. However, as it is an extremely mountainous region, it is hard for its residents to derive substantial agricultural products from the cultivated land. In many areas, productivity totally depends on rain. Normally, a large family depends on the product of a small piece of land. A larger part of this province is covered by snow during the winter season while some areas receive snow during late autumn and early spring. There is no other opportunity for Badakhshis to acquire enough income to support their dependents.

The main agricultural products of the province are wheat, barley, poppy, fruit and forests. Its natural resources are semi precious stones, gold, iron, lead, copper and salt. No industry exists in Badakhshan. However, some woollen carpets and rugs, leather and leather goods, and vegetable oil are produced through small scale private industries.

Moreover, the size of land holding is almost less than five jeribs per family. Arable land in this part of the country is only half irrigated. According to a report released by UNIDATA, 72 percent of the farmers in the province possess land of themselves whereas 20 percent are sharecroppers. Arable lands are mostly cultivated on rotation basis due to lack of water and weakness of the soil. Each year 59 percent of arable land is cultivated and 38 percent remains fallow, while orchards occupy three percent of cultivable land.

Orchards are more productive in some districts and produce fruit that would bring about substantial income to families engaged in these activities. Various kinds of

fruit are produced in the province. Apple, cherry, mulberry, almond, peas, peaches, apricot, grapes, etc. are the most important fruit in Badakhshan markets.

After crop production, animal husbandry is the second most important occupation of Badakhshis. Its green pastures make cattle raising a beneficial business, particularly for those living in villages. Many valleys in the province are covered by snow during winter. Farmers collect dry grass to feed their cattle in winter.

Badakhshan is divided into seven districts called Woloswali and six sub-districts called Alaqadari. The province has probably one of the best organized administration systems of the country. This is because mainly educated people are in-charge of the official affairs of the province. But administration system has been largely destroyed in remote districts and local areas.

The transportation network is underdeveloped, which largely contributes to its economic plunge. Before 1979, a total of 670 km roads were used by trucks and motor vehicles. Many rural areas are only accessible by animals and horse back. Due to rough roads and extremely poor transportation facilities, the transportation cost is considerably high in the province. All transport activities are undertaken through privately owned trucks and pickups. Rehabilitation of the roads and transportation facilities of the province is extremely important for the delivery of food supplies to vulnerable groups and for the improvement of the already weary living standard in the region.

The telephone system of the province is completely destroyed by the war. Before 1979, almost all parts of the province could enjoy telephone facilities. Telex facilities were available in Faizabad, the capital city. Today, no public communication exists in the province.

Electricity is available at low level in Faizabad, Kishm, and Buharak. Kerosene and animal dung are the main sources of energy. While wild rivers are flowing in many areas, there are not enough hydroelectric stations.

There are many rivers, streams, springs, and snow melted water flowing into different valleys in Badakhshan. This poor region of the country is rich in water resources which could be used for the production of electricity for public use. In most parts of the province, springs are the main sources of irrigation. Irrigation system of the province is poorly developed and traditionally people themselves take care of water supplies for irrigation purposes. Because of the hardship in the geographical structure of the province, it is not possible to use all springs and rivers that flow into the province. The presence of many mountains, upper valleys, and highlands have therefore largely contributed to the economic plunge of the area.

There are both formal and informal education systems. Informal education takes place in mosques and madrasas, while formal education takes place in government buildings. Before 1979, a total of ... students were attending schools. At present, according to a survey made by UNO/ESSP a total of 47,826 students are attending school of whom 38,383 are boys and 9,443 girls. A total of 2,040 teachers (1,690 male and 350 female) are serving at schools. A teachers training college was established in Faizabad in the late 1980s. About 26% of children between 5 and 14 are enrolled. Of this, 11% are girls and 39 % are boys. The survey made by UNO/ESSP indicates that for every 100 boys enrolled at grade 1, 18 will complete primary school, 6 middle school and 3 will reach grade 12. For every 100 girls enrolled at grade one 24 will complete primary school, 10 middle school and 5 secondary school.

Almost all school buildings in rural areas have been destroyed by the war. Students in rural villages set under the shadow of the trees or in the mosques. Only primary schools are resumed in rural areas. Secondary schools are active only in cities. They are facing shortages of text books, instructors, and other supplementary school supplies.

Policy Recommendation:

Badakhshan has been severely devastated by 15 years of war and hostilities. This part of the country was under the direct target of the Soviets because it was located in the neighborhood of Tajikistan. It is the province where the Soviets troops entered the country for the first time in the winter of 1979. This region has therefore incurred more losses in terms of destruction to property and civilian casualties. The reconstruction and rehabilitation is extremely important to assist the residents of Badakhshan to cope with the difficulties of life. Regrettably, at present juncture, aid agencies are reluctant to actively participate in the reconstruction process of Badakhshan because it is not easily accessible.

Today, the most forgotten people of Badakhshan need humanitarian assistance from outside more than any other time. The province is calm and peaceful. People have started rebuilding their destroyed houses and devastated economic infrastructure. The central government of the country is not in a position to help Badakhshan people to rebuild their ruined villages. The priorities of the government is focused in some other areas. This province has traditionally been ignored by the governments of Afghanistan. The main reason could be the remoteness of the province and the unviolent nature of its residents. This paper aims to recommend some policy measures that could be useful for the reconstruction of the province.

Responsibilities of the local Government:

The governor, general commanders, district managers, and elites of the province should realize that they would be accountable for their deeds. Today, it is a golden opportunity for the people of Badakhshan to unite for the reconstruction of the province.

The governor and the other relatively important elites of the province should actively participate in the political arena of the country. This will enable them to express their ideas and the problems of their people as well as defend the rights of their people. If so, then there will be little room for the government and other relief organizations to disregard the needs of Badakhshan. The local government can make some kind of alliance with those of neighbouring provinces and initiate political activities inside the country through which they could play their role in the establishment of peace and security in the country. They should mobilize and appropriately allocate domestic resources, organize village cooperatives and encourage community participation in the process of reconstruction. A better management and organized work will enable them to gain substantial support of the local people and hence contribute significantly to redevelopment of the region.

Recommendations:

The following are the immediate needs of the province:

I. Agriculture:

1. Appoint a commission to determine the present statistics on existing cultivable land, its productive capacity, irrigation springs, natural resources, and private orchards. The commission should also determine the extent of losses sustained by this sector.

2. Repair the irrigation system, defuse mines on cultivable lands, improve plantations, and protect forestry around the province.

3. Provide farmers with primary agricultural equipment, improved seed, fertilizer, etc.

4. Form a committee of farmers to arrange village cooperative works for cleaning springs and providing other necessary facilities to farmers in rural areas. Tools and equipments should be provided through private enterprises in the way that farmers can easily afford to use them. Serious measures should be undertaken to fight crop related disease. The production of cash crops should be intensified in areas concerned.

5. Introduce new methods and improved plants in the region. Encourage specialization in the production of the most abundant fruit in order to increase the national income of the province. An anti disease campaign is needed to protect fruit against various insects in the province.

6. Encourage and improve animal breeding especially in rural villages, through the import of improved livestock that can adapt to the climatic situation of the province and introduce new methods of animal growing.

7. Promote the expansion of poultry farms, fisheries, and horticulture in the province. Establish veterinary clinics in rural areas to fight the animal diseases. It is extremely important to conduct basic veterinary courses in district centres. Provision of medicine and other necessary equipment should be encouraged through private establishments.

8. Adopt serious measures to protect the wildlife and the green forests of the province. Badakhshan possesses the most beautiful pastures and valleys in the country. Provision of the national parks, forests, and wildlife will attract tourism in the region. As a result, many people will find employment.

II. Power Generation:

Initiate small scale hydroelectric projects in various districts to provide electricity at least to urban areas and repair the already destroyed power stations available in the area.

III. Transportation and Communication:

Rebuilding the province's destroyed transport and communication network has a profound impact on the economic development of the province. In short run the following urgent steps must be taken to improve this sector:

1. Form a survey team to collect information and statistics regarding the destruction.

2. Concentrate on reconstruction of the principle highway connecting Badakhshan with the rest of the country. Emphasize the rehabilitation of roads and bridges and construct a new road network to connect villages to towns and cities. Roads reconstruction can be under taken through food for work projects of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). National implementing NGOs should become involved in the rehabilitation of roads and bridges.

3. Local transport companies should be encouraged to resume their activities around the province. In the past many trucks, and buses used to carry out goods

and people to different parts of the province. Provide fuel at a subsidized price to revive local transportation companies.

3. Improve the Provincial air way and resume domestic flights.

4. Repair and improve facilities for local telephone services, particularly in cities, and increase the long distance telecommunication services.

IV. Education:

At present, when the reconstruction process of the province is underway, special attention should be paid towards the reconstruction of educational institutions. This will enable youth to be educated which would be a worthy investment in human resources. This will also encourage the young generation to replace the guns with pens and pencils. For the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the educational system of the province the following steps need to be considered:

1. Open primary schools in rural areas for boys and girls. Text books and school supplies should be freely distributed to the students of primary schools. Establish small libraries at each school and some supplementary books and other relatively important educational material should be made available in libraries. Vocational training and other experimental works should be provided for students at primary schools and make books and other materials available at nominal cost.

2. Establish vocational schools for disabled children to reduce the burden on their families. Provide hostels and dormitories to disabled and injured students in the province.

3. Procure documents that contain student records, types of schools, and the instructional language. A complete record of student enrollment, class registration, examination record, etc. should be kept at the provincial departments of education.

8. Encourage community participation in repairing local schools by contributing wood, stone, volunteer works, and other means to schools. Today there is a large possibility that people may voluntarily become involved in reconstruction of schools in villages. It is also important that school buildings be reconstructed in modern way using cement and other up to date construction materials.

V. Small Scale Industries:

The following steps are needed to be taken to rehabilitate the province's small scale industries:

1. Assist the owners of the industries receive raw materials at a lower price and introduce new technologies.

2. Provide workshops and training for local producers to improve both the quantity and the quality of goods produced. Enhance the export of goods produced at home to other provinces of the country and to foreign markets, if possible.

3. Provide loans and other necessary services for the local enterprises. Develop the formation of a small forum where the owners of these small scale industries can meet and discuss the policy measures for the future.

4. Provide incentives for outside investment.

5. Form chambers of commerce and cooperative companies at provincial level to further organize the industrial works in the province. Allow the outflow and inflow of goods and services in the province. Encourage the import of modern industrial consumer items through local competition in the region.

VI. Banks:

A branch of The Afghanistan Bank is the only bank functioning in Badakhshan which provides services to the government and deals with some local merchants mostly in transferring their funds to central bank or the other banks in Kabul. Encourage private banks to open branches in the capital of the province to accumulate small deposits and put them into productive uses which would circulate in local economy and create many jobs in the region. Local merchants and other people around the province must be encouraged to develop useful relationships with the banks. An information campaign is needed on the part of banks as well as local government to convince the residents of the province to deposit their sums in the banks.

VII. Concluding remarks:

Badakhshan can be called a forgotten area, while it has remained relatively peaceful. The war has motivated the revolutionary nature of Badakhshis which would require the people of the region to struggle for their rights.

If rehabilitated Badakhshan could significantly contribute to economic development of the nation by providing a large amount of exportable items. Dry fruit, wool, woolen materials, skin, animal meat, etc. could be produced and exported in large quantities.

Rehabilitation of Badakhshan is extremely important for both the economic progress of the country and economic development of the province in near future. Thus serious attention should be paid to the reconstruction of Badakhshan as it will significantly reduce the poppy and other illicit crop cultivation in the area which would in turn benefit the people in Afghanistan and other countries.